

## **Lake Michigan Coastal Wetlands - An Owner's Perspective**

### **Jeff Graft- Traverse City, MI 4/27/05**

Five variables affected my decision on how to deal with the natural coastal wetland that developed in front of my lake front property on East Grand Traverse Bay during this current period of low water levels. I chose to leave the plant growth in its natural state, because :

- 1) It's easier and cheaper to do nothing
  - the mowing, tilling and hand digging of the wetlands plants is difficult and expensive
- 2) The finished product after wetland plants are removed is not aesthetically pleasing
  - all that is left is the naturally occurring, mucky, nutrient rich soil - the texture and smell is not that pleasant when the natural vegetation is removed
  - a little kid is not going to sit in the muck with his plastic bucket and little shovel and play
  - it is a wetland and does not turn into a sugar sand beach, after the plants are yanked they simply regenerate...they are supposed to be there
  - a better scenario is to utilize the dryer upland beach as usual, and then build a temporary dock over the wetlands to access the lake for swimming
- 3) Intuitively, it seems right just to let the wetland be
  - the year to year fluctuations in the Great Lakes are normal and natural
  - the wetlands naturally develop
  - it is very difficult to me to believe that someone can look into a mirror and deep down say believe are doing the "right" thing for the health of the lake and the community by ripping out the natural vegetation.
- 4) Scientifically, we know the wetlands should remain undisturbed
  - the wetlands provide food and habitat for a diverse and complex group of animals, including insects, amphibians, fish, mammals and wetland birds
  - the Great Lakes supports nearly 200 species of fish- more than 90% of utilize coastal marshes or wetlands during some part of their lives
  - at the base of the chain are microscopic plants and animals, these are destroyed by the destruction of the wetland plant life
- 5) It does not benefit our local economy
  - we have a tourist driven economy

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- the bay and the areas smaller lakes and streams are economic assets and should be protected to maintain the long term health of our economy
- the bay belongs to the community....no one has the right to jeopardize its health....
- waterfront owners should be stewards of the lakeshore and concerned about its long term well being, ....they should not have a self interested, short term perspective